

## Public Participation as an Instrument for Incorporating Local Knowledge into Planning Processes

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**Abstract:** Public participation in planning relates to involving the public in planning processes, and encompasses many types of participatory practices whose objectives are to enable better understanding of residents' genuine spatial needs, perceptions and desires (i.e., local knowledge), and to catalyze their incorporation into planning decision-making processes. Nonetheless, in many cases, participatory planning deliverables don't reflect local knowledge, and in some cases even conflict therewith, compromising community sustainability and residents' quality of life. The question arises: Which participatory practices are most efficacious in capturing local knowledge and incorporating it into plans? Case studies of various participatory processes conducted in Israel clearly show that unidirectional participatory procedures used by jurisdictions do not capture genuine local knowledge, nor do they incorporate it into plans. Alongside this, the findings demonstrate how collaborative initiatives enhance the ability to extract local knowledge and incorporate it into planning. This study provides a better understanding of the elements affecting the ability of public participatory practices to enable incorporation of residents' preferences, ideas, opinions, desires, and needs into plans.

### Introductory

There is unanimity in the academic discourse regarding the importance of local knowledge in improving the planning product (Corburn, 2003; Irwin, 1995; Krinsky, 1984; Wates, 2000; Webler, 1995; Yearley, 2000). Moreover, public participation is frequently demonstrated as able to extract local knowledge and enable its incorporation into planning products (Hopkins, 2007; Innes and Booher, 2000, 2004; Lowndes et al., 2001a). Nonetheless, researchers point to a huge challenge in integrating local knowledge into the planning process, as local knowledge is raw and unripe, and contains a vast variety of knowledge items and information types, some specific and others general and abstract, rendering its categorization and interpretation difficult (Alfasi, 2003; Campbell and Marshall, 2000; Rantanen, 2007). At this juncture, the need arises for examining to what extent various public participation practices successfully reveal local knowledge and process it into practical planning information. Moreover, there is no mention in the scientific literature of a study or a model for evaluating the ability of public participation practices<sup>1</sup> to expose, extract, and interpret local knowledge or incorporate it into planning deliverables. This bears out the importance of the proposed research, whose purpose is to compare various participatory practices, seeking to discern their respective efficacies in uncovering local knowledge and incorporating it into plans.

### Conceptual context

#### ***Local knowledge and public participation***

Local knowledge represents the perspective of local people who could be affected by plans or by environmental nuisances caused by planning policy. The local knowledge entity is a large, complex epistemological system that relates to a broad conceptual scope that includes perceptions, desires, grievances, opinions, ideas, beliefs, thoughts, speculations, preferences and feelings. It also addresses needs, cultural codes, and spatial conducts, all of which are embedded in the locals' everyday reality (Berman and Schnell, 2012; Corburn, 2003; Geertz, 1983; Innes and Booher, 2004; Lindblom and Cohen, 1979; UN, 2007). Toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the recognition of the value of local knowledge and its significance — which challenges experts' professional knowledge, previously believed to be the ultimate knowledge on which planning should be based — is considered a historical turning point in planning thought and theory (Sandercock, 1998). Understanding the local knowledge system enables

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<sup>1</sup> At least 10 models of evaluating public participation procedures appear in the literature: evaluating procedural elements (Hopkins, 2007, p. 639); evaluating the scope of participation (Lowndes et al., 2001a,b); profiling the groups and individuals participating (Plein et al., 1998); the extent of commitment felt by the participants in the process (Marshall and Ozawa, 2001); the scope and type of issues addressed in the cooperative process (Dukes et al., 2001); the type of information relayed in the process (Alterman et al., 1984); whether the process is conducted within the establishment or outside it (Innes and Booher, 2000); the source of the initiative of the process (Beierle and Konisky, 2000); the directing of the process vis-à-vis horizon and time frame, and its profiling as process-oriented or results-oriented (Plein et al., 1998); and the power of citizens' participation as per the Arnstein scale (Arnstein, 1969): manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control.

planning the locals' living environments in such a way as to suit their everyday reality and improve their quality of life (Wates, 2000). Therefore, it is reasonable to claim that local knowledge's significance is vital for generating better planning and decision-making processes (Corburn, 2003); and that integration of experiential, authentic, locale-based knowledge into planning processes produces planning products that better suit community needs and preferences (Bradford, 2005; Lowndes et al., 2001b; Scott, 1998; Wilson, 1999). Therefore, the ability to efficiently (fairly and sustainably) plan the city is dependent on local knowledge's availability.

While nature of space and its significances, reflected in the local knowledge system, are taken for granted as per phenomenological geography (Buttimer, 1976; Relph, 1976), local knowledge is largely hidden, lying tacit and dormant within communities (Campbell and Marshall, 2000; Collins, 2001; Corburn, 2003; Krimsky, 1984; Polanyi, 1958). Therefore, there is a need to conduct activities aimed at capturing local knowledge, rendering it explicit and usable, and its access and incorporation into plans executed and upheld. In this paper, a comparative investigation will be described that evaluates the capabilities of various participatory practices to extract local knowledge and incorporate it into planning deliverables. It is acceptable to perceive public participation in planning as a tool for strengthening participatory democracy (Dryzek, 1990; Healy, 1997; Niemeyer and Spash, 2001); obtaining legitimacy from the public to execute slated plans (Churchman and Sadan, 2003; Innes, 2004); realize environmental and social justice (Fainstein and Fainstein, 2013; Innes and Booher, 2004), and develop sustainable planning (Amado et al., 2009). However, this inventory of participatory purposes cannot be accomplished without the incorporation of residents' local knowledge into planning decision processes (Innes and Booher, 2000, 2004; Lowndes et al., 2001a). It is difficult to imagine a democracy in which citizens' opinions are not manifested in policy. We will certainly not succeed in gaining legitimacy from the residents without having them express their opinions regarding plans at hand; nor will justice and sustainability be achieved if we do not include the needs and perspectives of the various communities residing in the area in question, in crafting policy (Corburn, 2003). In other words, failure to incorporate local knowledge into planning deliverables precludes public empowerment and the declared purposes of public participation.

### ***Public participation and the planning process***

Following World War II, alongside the evolution of planning as a scientific discipline, rational-comprehensive planning theory emerged. Legitimation required professionals to draft planning alternatives based on scientific knowledge and elected officials to choose the optimal alternative from their perspective as public representatives (Camhis, 1979; Lindblom, 1959). Planning based on the rational-comprehensive approach was carried out without public participation, with locals' needs more often than not simply assumed (Fried and Gleicher, 1961; Gans, 1965). The first challenge to the rational-comprehensive theory lay in the concept of *advocacy planning* (Davidoff, 1965), which is sensitive to locals' views and emphasizes public representation and participation in the planning decision process. Arnstein (1969) believed involving the public to be a means to generating social reform by reapportioning power between the public and policy-setters. In addition to municipal elections, formal practices of public participation began evolving in the 1960s and included mainly public hearings. The average time allotted to a participant to speak during a formal public hearing was few minutes (in the US, three minutes), during which the participant was required to express him/herself in language used by planners and present arguments that fit the planning discourse, all without adequate qualification or training, and without the right to any feedback from the planning authority. In response, Innes and Booher (2000) explained how, in their efforts to involve the public, planners and officials use non-formal procedures adopted from social science research methods, i.e., focus groups,<sup>2</sup> public opinion surveys, structured questionnaires, and SWOT.<sup>3</sup>

The common denominator of these formal and non-formal procedures is their being unidirectional, or characterized by "one-way communication" (Brody et al., 2003, p. 250), involving two interested parties – the jurisdiction and the citizen – in such a way as to make the local knowledge exposure process scripted, restricted, maneuvered, measured and defined by the governance in a top-down manner. It is reasonable

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<sup>2</sup> In public participation, a focus group is perceived as a form of qualitative research, controlled by a facilitator, in which a group of people are asked their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes regarding an environmental issue, plan or planning provision, concept or problem.

<sup>3</sup> The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) model of strategic management gives the participants an opportunity to point out strengths and weaknesses of a specific project, plan, neighborhood or city (Berman and Schnell, 2012).

to assume that these participation procedures, without feedback, cut-off of the public from the planning and political systems, such that not only are the sides at odds, but the disputes between them are exacerbated (Lowendes et al., 2001b).

The consequent sense of alienation among citizens and residents likely precipitates their participation in a bottom-up manner, e.g., forming residents' committees and NGOs, and strengthening social coalitions that amass political power and professional knowledge, both of which are necessary for changing planning processes and policies. These social networks constitute the human and political infrastructure for the development of collaborations, including communication between several stakeholders, who consolidate from among the players to advocate for ideas, plans, and policies around a general or a specific issue. These deliberative networks of public participation have evolved in communities around the world since the end of the 20th century, alongside unidirectional public participation procedures. The shift in planning perception in the 1990s, or the *communicative turn*, and the emergence of the communicative planning approach, call for placing planning in the public sphere where it can be both fertilized by civil society and fashioned by public discourse (Fainstein, 2000; Forester, 1992, 1999; Healey, 1992; Taylor, 1998). The collaborative interfaces emphasize deliberative democracy, which gives all stakeholders the opportunity to actively participate in discussions that combine professional knowledge with local knowledge (Cooke, 2000; Healey, 1993, 1996, 1997; Martens, 2001).

## Methodology

A comparative study of various participatory practices that examines an inventory of parameters related to the extraction of local knowledge and its incorporation into planning should reveal the most efficacious public participation path for exposing local knowledge and incorporating it into planning deliverables. To that end, a five-year study was conducted tracking participatory processes in various locales in Israel, in each of which, concurrently, a variety of participatory procedures were conducted surrounding the same plans or environmental nuisances. Regarding each of the locales and processes, a comparison was done between the various participation practices (which more or less were repeated in each locale / case) according to about 50 variables, such as the motive for the participatory initiative, the identity of the facilitator(s), types of procedures and tools employed, configurations of communication between participants, types of local knowledge elicited from residents, processing modes of the elicited knowledge, and incorporation modes of the processed knowledge into plans. The study's objective was to examine how these parameters could influence the capability of participatory practices to effectively extract local knowledge and incorporate it into plans. It emerged that participation practices could be categorized by various parameters. In comparing categories, it emerged that the differences in the values of most of the variables were largest between categories of unilateral participation practices and collaborative / grassroots practices. Each of these categories represents an approach or method that differs entirely vis-à-vis public participation in planning: One is controlled and maneuvered by authorities in a top-down manner, based on unilateral procedures such as public hearings, SWOT, alternatives selection,<sup>4</sup> criteria prioritization,<sup>5</sup> focus groups or structured questionnaires. The other, used by residents, generates ongoing, collaborative dialogue between individuals whose daily lives are disrupted by the same nuisance, and between them and professionals as well as other stakeholders, in a bottom-up manner. While the unilateral method failed at exposing local knowledge, the collaborative / grassroots method succeeded at exposing and incorporating local knowledge into planning deliverables. The comparison between the methods identified the mechanisms that should lead to better incorporation of local knowledge into planning. Alongside theoretical development, conclusions were drawn and practical recommendations made for improving public participation in planning.

## Comparing unilateral and collaborative grassroots methods of public participation

The comparison between the unilateral and the collaborative grassroots methods is set forth in the following (five) numbered items, listed chronologically by events in the participatory process with the objective of outlining the local knowledge exposure process and its incorporation into planning deliverables.

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<sup>4</sup> The Alternatives Selection technique allows participants to rank or prioritize planning alternatives drafted by professionals or officials beforehand, without public participation (Berman and Schnell, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> The Criteria Prioritization technique asks recipients to choose a few urban or planning issues from a list of those that need to be dealt with urgently.

### 1. *Motives and motivators of the participatory process*

Cities initiate participatory processes in planning in response to provisions stated in law and/or professional norms that have taken root in the planning arena. Residents initiate collaborative participatory processes spurred by an environmental nuisance that disrupts their daily routines and/or a slated plan that threatens to negatively impact their living space. *Table 1 compares parameters of the two participation methods.*

**Table 1: Motives and motivators of participatory processes**

Parameter	Unilateral methods	Collaborative grassroots method
Trigger for participation process	Statutory provisions, professional norms	Environmental nuisance that disrupts residents' daily routines and/or a slated plan that threatens to do so in the future
Initiators of the participation process	Cities or planners employed by cities	Residents

### 2. *Procedures' and communication's configurations*

Most of the unilateral procedures occur in the form of a one-time gathering controlled by the facilitator in such a way as to not allow the participants freedom to communicate among themselves, not to mention engage in a deliberative interaction. In contrast to the unilateral process, the collaborative procedure is based on multiple, deliberative meetings of the network members that stimulate communication between the participants over time, via a range of channels, both online and live, such that a collective discourse evolves between the participants around a matter on the agenda. Therefore, unilateral procedures and tools do *not* enable the types of cooperation and interaction, as Coleman (1988) defined them, that build social capital, deliberative practices and trust relations by means of changes in relationships between people. Social capital and trust relations encourage the participants to learn each other's grievances and to bridge gaps, to raise local knowledge to the surface, and together to find solutions to problems that plague them (Brownill and Carpenter, 2007; White, 2001). *Table 2 compares parameters of the participatory methods.*

**Table 2: Procedures and their communication configurations**

Parameter	Unilateral methods	Collaborative grassroots method
Procedure type and tools applied	Structured Questionnaire, SWOT, <sup>3</sup> Alternative Selection, <sup>4</sup> Focus Group <sup>2</sup>	Grassroots movement
Characteristics of communication between participants	No communicative interaction at a one-time gathering	Deliberative, free communication via multiple interactions and multiple channels
Social capital level among participants	Negligible / Very low / None	High

### 3. *Extracting local knowledge*

The tools applied over the course of unilateral processes expose scant local knowledge that is superficial, obscured and truncated, as opposed to deliberative procedures that stimulate exposure of abundant, varied, detailed, and elaborated local knowledge. First of all, unilateral processes enable short, one-time exposure of local knowledge, as opposed to collaborative procedures which occur over long periods and multiple events. As a result, the collaborative method exposes more local knowledge, as well as more types of knowledge, than does any unilateral method.

In addition, unilateral tools are based on structured, closed queries that do not enable the respondents to elaborate on or explain their answers and remarks. As a result, the knowledge obtained is often random, characterized by truncated sentences or even single words that cannot be consolidated. Moreover, the unilateral tools are pre-formulated and aimed at exposing only certain types of local knowledge that have been determined in advance by the tool-builders. Therefore, hidden aspects of local knowledge that the tool-builders did not take into account are overlooked or completely missed (Berman and Schnell, 2012).

In contrast, the collaborative tools encourage free-flowing exposure, in a welcoming atmosphere, of authentic types of local knowledge that are not revealed by the unilateral tools. Also in contrast to the unilateral method, the ongoing discourse between the collaborative network members enables exposure of types of knowledge from a deep level of the local knowledge system, including philosophies and ideologies related to planning and environmental perspectives and outlooks surrounding the issue at hand (Berman, 2015). *Table 3 compares the ability of participatory methods to extract local knowledge.*

**Table 3: Extracting local knowledge**

Parameter	Unilateral methods	Collaborative grassroots method
Local knowledge exposure time	Restricted, controlled, and planned in advance (about an hour)	Multiple periods over a long time frame (months); free-flowing exposure
Types of local knowledge exposed	Exposure tools planned in advance to expose only certain types of local knowledge	“Torrential” exposure of broad scope and many types of local knowledge
Quality of local knowledge exposed	Low quality: scant, superficial, obscure, momentary, spontaneous, single words, truncated sentences	High quality: abundant, elaborated, well-argued, formulated, intelligent, deep (including ideologies)

#### **4. Processing local knowledge**

The unilateral process exposes low-quality local knowledge that cannot be processed to obtain professional planning knowledge, not to mention operative recommendations. The local knowledge exposed using unilateral tools appears as a list of dry data that is used to draft a summary of the meeting that gets stapled to the planning file. In contrast, the collaborative process stimulates exposure of quality local knowledge that constitutes fertile soil for obtaining operative planning knowledge by means of a dialectic between professional knowledge and local knowledge based on mutual understanding between lay locals and planning professionals (Forester, 1999; Friedmann, 1987). The output obtained is professional knowledge, operative recommendations, and planning alternatives built / based on the local knowledge (Petts and Brooks, 2006; Staffans, 2004). The collaborative method advances consensus among the network members about the planning knowledge formulated. The unilateral process does not enable the building of reliable, relevant knowledge, not to mention consensus. *Table 4 compares the ability of participatory methods to process local knowledge.*

**Table 4: Processing local knowledge**

Parameter	Unilateral methods	Collaborative grassroots method
Type of local knowledge processing	Statistical computation of data; making lists, tables and diagrams	Discursive dialectic between the local knowledge of residents and professional knowledge of experts
Nature of planning knowledge obtained	Not obtained	Planning alternatives, professional recommendations
Consensus obtained about planning knowledge	None	Broad agreement toward consensus

#### **5. Incorporation of local knowledge into planning**

The unilateral method does not aim to incorporate residents’ local knowledge into plans and therefore makes no effort to expose quality, reliable local knowledge. In essence, a political manipulation is executed on the community, not to mention the fact that the data gathered from the local knowledge system can be statistically manipulated to serve the city’s interests (Berman and Schnell, 2012). In contrast, the collaborative method aims to incorporate as much of the local knowledge system as possible in order to frame and codify the planning problem in question. Using resources built by the collaborative network, particularly social capital and a planning knowledge front, the network has the political power to constitute a central stakeholder, to harness other stakeholders (especially city, planning boards and developers) as parties to the planning discourse around the problem in question; to conduct negotiations

with them and, via compromise among all players, to decide which aspects of local knowledge will be incorporated into the planning decision process to comply with the statutory provisions, directives and plans. *Table 5 compares the ability of participatory methods to incorporate local knowledge into planning deliverables.*

**Table 5: Incorporation of local knowledge into planning deliverables**

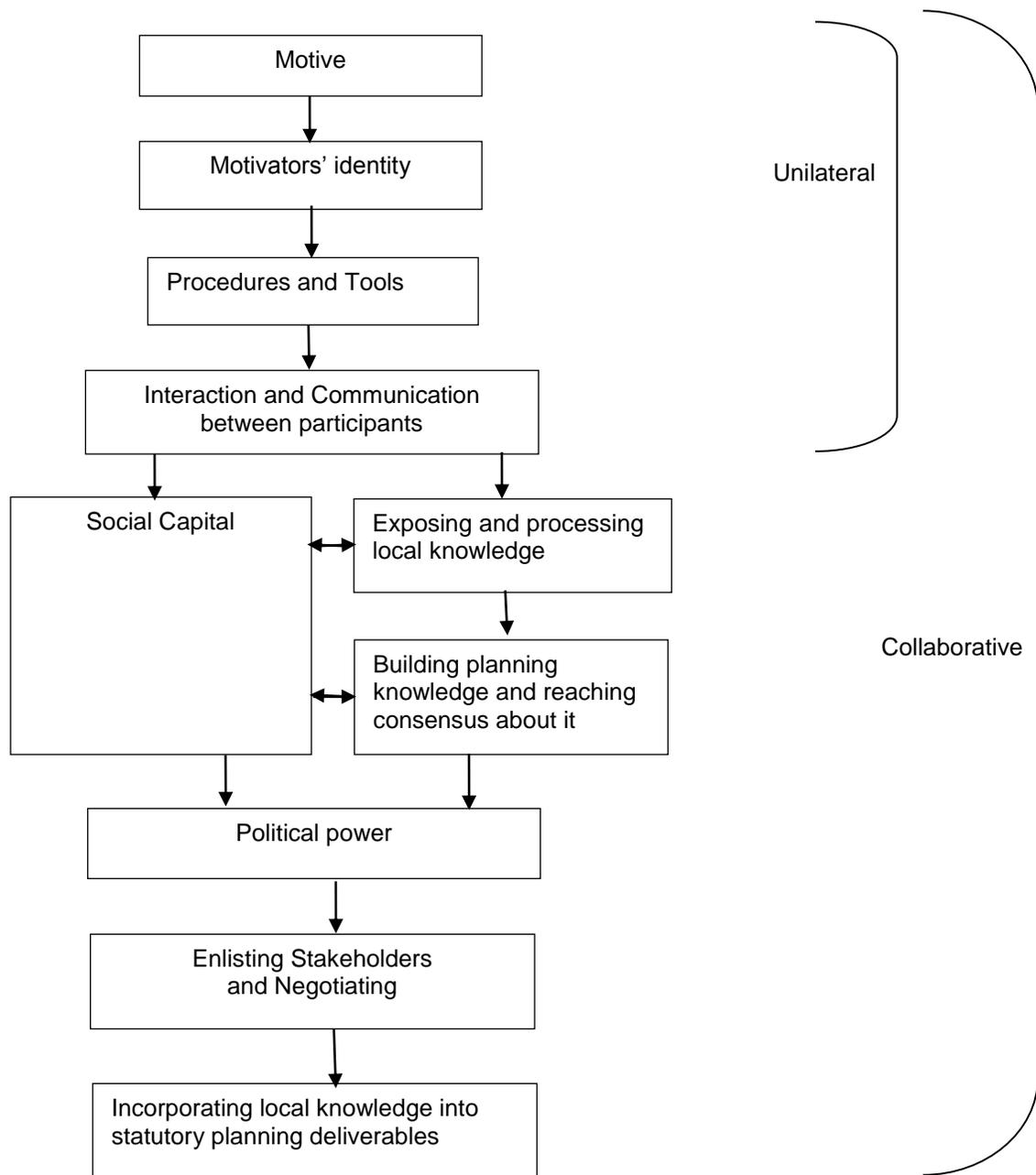
Parameter	Unilateral methods	Collaborative grassroots method
Level of political power built	None / Very low	High
Nature of the Incorporation process	Political and statistical manipulation of the community by the city government	Negotiations between the residents and other stakeholders: the city, developers, and planning boards
Incorporation of local knowledge into planning deliverables	Local knowledge is not incorporated or only one aspect is randomly incorporated	Significant aspects of the local knowledge system are incorporated

**Participatory methods’ mechanisms**

The comparison between the participatory methods via an inventory of parameters exposed each method’s mechanisms. The collaborative method’s mechanism is efficient and enables exposure of local knowledge and its incorporation into planning deliverables. The unilateral methods’ mechanisms do not enable exposure of local knowledge, not to mention its incorporation into planning. The collaborative mechanism uses deliberative procedures that stimulate mutual, free, and open communication; building trust and social capital, as well as discourse around the issues on the agenda. The discourse that evolves in turn accelerates exposure of local knowledge and encourages its processing via a dialectic between residents and professionals that results in operative planning knowledge (including professional recommendations and planning alternatives) about which a consensus evolves among the network members: The social capital facilitates the discourse based on trust relations that lead to the resolution of conflicts and a consensus about the steady accumulation of planning knowledge (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Elster, 1998; Habermas, 1990; Hiller, 2003). The resulting collective resources – social capital, a planning knowledge front, and consensus about it – take the form of political power (Ferguson and Dickens, 1999) that enables the group to harness other stakeholders to the planning discourse and conduct negotiations with them (Bratt and Reardon, 2013) regarding incorporation of planning knowledge in the statutory planning decision process.

Figure 1 below depicts the influence of the criteria tested against one another in a certain flow order that led to success in the revelation and incorporation of local knowledge. In contrast to the collaborative mechanism, the unilateral mechanism uses participation procedures and tools that block communication between participants, such that building collective resources – social capital, planning knowledge, and political power – is disabled. The absence of collective resources impedes the group’s ability to move to the stage of incorporation of local knowledge into planning deliverables. Figure 1 depicts the hurdles that the unilateral mechanism places on moving to the stage of amassing collective resources. Figure 1 also illustrates the importance of choosing participatory procedures and tools, because these can either accelerate or impede the participatory process in terms of exposure and incorporation of local knowledge. Most valuable are those procedures that enable the acquisition of resources – social capital, planning knowledge based on local knowledge, and consensus about it – because these enable the building of political power, in turn enabling the community to negotiate with external stakeholders (city governments, planning boards and developers) about the incorporation of the planning knowledge that was shaped from local knowledge into planning deliverables.

**Figure 1: Interrelations between criteria that measure participatory mechanisms' efficacies**



**Manipulation versus citizen control**

The unilateral mechanisms confer most of the power on city governments and exclude the participants from all avenues of communication that could add to their social or political power, not to mention free and independent exposure of local knowledge. In contrast, the collective mechanism confers maximal power on the residents by encouraging them to engage and build collective resources, as well as expose local knowledge thoroughly and process it via free deliberation with professionals. The strength of participatory procedures lies in their ability to either facilitate or impede communicative, interpersonal interaction among the participants such that to a great extent, they determine the extent of control exerted on the participatory process. The unilateral mechanisms actually aim at the manipulation of the community, as they are designed in configurations that prevent the participants from exerting any control

over the planning process. This disabling of communication between the participants prevents the exposure of quality local knowledge and the acquisition of power resources. In contrast to the unilateral mechanisms, the collective mechanism is aimed at community empowerment and confers full power and control over the participatory process on the residents.

The dichotomy between unilateral and collaborative grassroots approaches of public participation in planning corresponds with Arnstein's (1969, p. 216) claim: "There is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having real power." Arnstein addressed "level of control" in a widely cited "ladder" of participation. Its lowest rung is "manipulation", followed in ascending order by "therapy," "informing," "consultation," "placation," "partnership," and "delegated power" (see Table 6). Actual "citizen control" occupies the top rung. While many jurisdictions are unwilling to relinquish control and therefore promote unidirectional participatory techniques, a successful collaborative public participation process would aim toward the top of the ladder.

According to Arnstein (1969), the bottom rungs of the ladder are "manipulation" and "therapy" (rungs 1 and 2 in Table 6), which describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by those in power to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not enabling residents to participate in planning, but rather enabling the powerholders to use or "cure" the participants, precisely as is done in the unilateral method which does not lead to incorporation of local knowledge into planning deliverables. Instead, the bottom rungs of the ladder provide the powerholders with "evidence" of the public having "participated." Further up the Arnstein ladder are levels of "citizen power" characterized by increasing degrees of decision-making clout that enable citizens to enter into a "partnership" (rung 6) that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with other stakeholders, e.g., city / jurisdiction, planning boards and developers.

The collaborative participation method enables participants to acquire social capital and build a planning knowledge front. These resources give residents some genuine bargaining power over the outcome of the plan. In other words, "delegated power" (rung 7) enables the residents to engage with powerful stakeholders in aiming at incorporation of local knowledge into statutory deliverables. At these rungs of the ladder, power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between residents, professionals, and powerful stakeholders. They agree on planning deliverables through such structures as lay-professional networks, joint policy boards, and mechanisms for resolving impasses, and they establish planning provisions and design the statutory products through some form of give-and-take. The topmost rung, "citizen control" (rung 8), describes the full functional power residents obtain, similar to the collaborative grassroots participation method, in which the local knowledge extraction and incorporation process is fully controlled by the participants. Full power in the hands of residents generates a successful participatory process and outcome in which significant and major parts of the local knowledge system are incorporated into statutory planning. The correspondence between participation methods and Arnstein's levels of citizen control is roughly displayed in Table 6.

**Table 6: Arnstein's Ladder of public participation (1969) and participatory methods**

Rung	Arnstein Ladder (1969) Levels of citizen control over planning		Participation Methods Participation methods arranged by their comparative ability to expose local knowledge and incorporate it into planning deliverables
	1	Manipulation	Nonparticipation
2	Therapy		
3	Informing	Tokenism	Improved unilateral and Network participation
4	Consultation		
5	Placation		
6	Partnership	Citizen power	Collaborative participation
7	Delegated power		
8	Citizen control		

Arnstein's ladder is proposed as a tool for identifying the actual level of influence that citizens have on planning processes, out of a sense of obligation to build a society in which the voices of all publics, including marginalized groups, are heard and taken into account when crafting urban policy and drafting plans. But Arnstein's model does not tell us *how* to ascend to the highest rung and actually increase the citizens' participation level. These research findings add a practical dimension / tier to Arnstein's Ladder by explaining how to reach Citizen Power and Citizen Control by employing a certain participatory approach, i.e., the collaborative grassroots method (Berman, 2015).

## Conclusions

The research question is "Which are the best practices for revealing local knowledge and incorporating it into planning deliverables?" We have a definitive answer: Collaborative, deliberative participatory practices that take the shape of grassroots citizen initiatives. Therefore, we must encourage residents to initiate collaborative grassroots participation processes. Since most collaborative grassroots initiations have been conducted among communities that are both relatively homogeneous in income and ethnic background (Alesina and Ferrara, 2000; Zak and Knack, 2001) and that are socioeconomically strong with high levels of civic and environmental awareness (Berman, 2015), there is a need to educate communities with low civic and environmental awareness and explain to them the significance of planning and the importance of their participation in it. We cannot and should not wait for strong homogeneous communities (with high civic and environmental consciousness) to initiate participatory processes. We must extract recommendations for participation via collaborative mechanisms that are implementable by other parties seeking to initiate participatory processes, such as NGOs, city governments, and planners. The obligation to involve public participation in planning that emerges from research findings requires that we develop working frameworks based on the collaborative method that will, in accordance with its mechanism, lead not only to placing power into the hands of the community, but also lead to improving the quality of life via the incorporation of local knowledge into statutory planning deliverables.

It is therefore recommended to discontinue conducting unilateral public participation procedures and to adopt collaborative procedures in their stead. Emphasis should be placed on participatory configuration of a relatively large, flexible, and open network, as well as empathic interaction and deliberative, multi-directional, ongoing communication that continues for the duration of the planning process. Collaborative procedures should be employed, enabling participants to freely interact and communicate with each other; providing the resources and time needed for them to expose local knowledge and consolidate it into operative planning knowledge and an alternative plan, and reach consensus about the plan among participants. In addition, it is incumbent upon the facilitators to make sure that planning professionals participate in the evolving discourse, while enabling unmediated interaction between residents and professionals, such that local knowledge guides and is guided by professional knowledge. Moreover, the deliberation should be stimulated by procedures and tools that enable "a flood of exposure" of various types and aspects of local knowledge over long intervals, unmediated by closed queries prepared in advance.

Directions derived from the research findings on how to design a proper participatory practice raise familiar procedures such as Charrette<sup>6</sup>, which based on a network communication configuration and could be easily refined to incorporate the previously mentioned recommendations. The network-based participation is less recommended than the collaborative grassroots participation, but it provides a much better framework than the unilateral method. In addition, unilateral tools can be improved by opening up pre-made structured questionnaires and adding deliberative components such as discussion between participants on issues at hand via free expression of local knowledge, i.e., perspectives, opinions, outlooks, feelings, ideologies and needs regarding environmental issues and plans. Both Network and Improved unilateral methods may be located in between the unilateral and collaborative methods, as illustrated in Table 6.

Directing participatory procedures based on the proposed new methods, i.e., Network and Improved unilateral, should accelerate the accumulation of collective resources, e.g., social and political capital

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<sup>6</sup> The US [National Charrette Institute](#) site states that the charrette is a cooperative, creative, and intensive planning process attended by a professional team and all stakeholders in a given plan, that gathers all decision makers in one place, where all involved parties sit together in the vicinity of the site for a period of days and hammer out an implementable plan.

alongside operative planning knowledge, which could position the community (represented by the collaborative network) as a stakeholder facing traditional ones, e.g., the jurisdiction, planning boards and developers. The community's new political status ensures the acceleration of the discourse surrounding the plan (nuisance) at hand outside the community and, in turn, promotes negotiation between all parties on how and which parts and aspects of the local knowledge (via the accumulated planning knowledge) will be incorporated into planning decision making.

### ***The Australian horizon***

In the White Papers of the New Planning System for New South Wales (2013),<sup>7</sup> an inventory of participation procedures based on social networks was proposed, similar to the Network method, as part of the toolkit of statutory means for involving the public in planning and enhancing access to local knowledge. The procedures mentioned included: a citizens' jury,<sup>8</sup> advisory committees and public meetings, panels and workshops, community research, and a randomly selected consultative panel of 600 to 1200 participants, as well as a number of online deliberative techniques such as online forums combined with interactive maps. In contrast to NSW, in Israel there are no instructions in the planning system regarding the procedures or the methodology to be employed for involving the public. In the absence of such instructions, informal unilateral public participation methods have been rooted in the Israeli planning system, such as one-time meetings to prioritize criteria, to choose between planning options, or to use the SWOT model to elicit strengths and weaknesses of respective options.

The new planning system in New South Wales indicates that the NSW government acknowledges both the statutory system's obligation to provide instructions related to the type of procedures that should be activated as part of the public participation process, and the importance of choosing these procedures as a significant variable that is likely to affect planning deliverables. This governmental awareness corresponds with the research conclusion that the participatory approach and procedures have a decisive effect on the process' ability to extract local knowledge and incorporate it into planning deliverables. However, relying on the Network method does not exempt residents from initiating collaborative grassroots participatory processes and NGOs should encourage residents to do so. In addition, in order to refine the proposed collaborative procedures, the actual participation of planning professionals as members of the collaborative networks must be statutorily ensured.

The advanced approach of NSW dovetails with Australia being among the trailblazers in the process of democratization of planning. Sandercock (2006) identifies a number of state governments in Australia that in the 1970s were the first to pass planning laws containing provisions requiring public consultation to be an integral part of the planning process. Nevertheless, Australian cities have not always been innocent. In 2003-2005, as part of a metropolitan planning process in Perth, a public participation process was conducted called *Dialog With the City*. Touted as the broadest participation process in the southern hemisphere, it consisted of choosing between four alternative models prepared in advance by the jurisdictions: a decentralized city, a compact city, a multi-node city, and a grid city. In addition, the jurisdiction used a structured questionnaires filled out by 1,100 citizens from a sample of 8,000 to whom the questionnaires were sent. Lastly, a series of heterogeneous focus groups were held (Hopkins, 2007). In Hopkin's opinion, there was manipulation and no real public participation in Perth.

The NSW case demonstrates that in the not-too-distant future, we should see more Australian governments abandoning unilateral methods as they recognize the advantages of more collaborative procedures and the Network method in bringing about genuine partnership and the revelation of reliable local knowledge: "Genuine community participation requires authorities to commit resourcing to planning processes to create a culture that values ideas, knowledge and contributions from all parts of the community..." (The White Papers).

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.planning.org.au/documents/item/5305>

<sup>8</sup> A type of participation comprised of a panel of about 12 lay residents in the configuration of a jury that examines a burning public issue in detail and produces a commensurate decision or "ruling."

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